

DARK HAPPINESS

Elizabeth Zink

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AMERICAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE BLIND INC.

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 cop. 1 Living despairingly in that dim world of unreality, was she justified in the deception which was her only hope for happiness? c. 1

Elizabeth Zink

DARK HAPPINESS



Frantically my hands clutched the empty air in a vain effort to touch something familiar.

A MARVEL! That is what folks have called me ever since my little quizzical ears have been cocked toward the mysteries of life, and because of this unchallenged opinion I thought that nothing in this world could feaze me. I even thought that the astounding plan of

life I outlined for myself could be lived without an unwanted consequence, without a heart-ache.

But I didn't realize that my mother and father were the motive power behind that opinion. Just because I could walk, or run, all about our spacious grounds, evading a flower plot here or a tree there, folks gasped in amazement. It was not until I visited a neighbor and found my feet clinging to unaccustomed ground, that I knew the truth. It was then that I really discovered that I was not like other people.

Blind from birth, I began to know that there was something in the world, a mysterious something, and further than that, the mystery seemed to be all mine. People could see; could look at things, things they couldn't touch. Overhead was the vault of heaven. Sometimes it was blue with a golden ball of sun; sometimes blue, covered with white, fleecy clouds. Sometimes at night it was a velvety blackness, dotted with twinkling stars and a big moon in place of the sun, far, far out of reach, and yet folks knew all about it.

I longed so much to touch this sky, because I loved the feel of velvet, but here the mystery deepened. My velvet dress was red, and as I tried to right the darkened world to my own understanding, the touch of velvet meant red to me, and when I heard that the sky above was like black velvet, I added the phase of color to the never solved mysteries of the blind.

And so the fact that I was a marvel was a solace of never ending joy to me in my dark corner of the world. Never did a gasp or shriek of fear fail to delight me as I ran as fast as I

could and stopped dead short at the pitch of a terrace. Little could they know I had tumbled down that terrace so many times, that necessity in the garb of mother of invention had forced me to learn that twenty-one running steps from the rose arbor was the dead line.

I fingered my way through an education in a blind

Bitter Fruit

By Faith Baldwin

SOMETIMES I think that jealousy wrecks more lives and disrupts more homes than any pestilence. The little bride who says gaily, a bit complacently, "Oh, but my husband is too terribly jealous," does not realize what trouble she is making for herself by, if her statement be true, encouraging ever so little that quality in the man she has married. Many young married women say, and perhaps really believe, "I like my husband to be jealous. It shows that he cares." And many have followed the advice of well-meant friends who say, "If your man seems to be slipping a bit, go out, flirt, make him jealous. It always works." Well, perhaps it does but sometimes it works the wrong way.

Remember that the jealous man or woman makes his or her own life miserable as well as the object of jealousy. The person who is really jealous draws no peaceful breath. Everything is exaggerated in his eyes, everything conspires against his peace of mind.

The jealous man is the man with a very strong sense of possession. He would own the every thought of her he loves. He even feels that by his jealousy he is proving his love. He is not. He is proving that he feels himself inferior, that he fears himself, that he dreads lest he have not the power to hold the beloved. He is proving that, lacking trust in himself, he lacks trust in the person he most cares for.

This is true also of the jealous woman; the woman jealous of her husband or of her children. It holds true in the jealousy that even small children feel. I am sure that if you stop to consider you will know many people who suffer from jealousy, their own or another's. Perhaps you yourself have so suffered. There are cures, you know, in this enlightened day and age. Some of the most exciting stories and books have been written with jealousy as a basic theme. Some of the stories which will never be written are more illuminating still. I once had a very famous young woman say to me of her equally famous husband, "Oh, if I could only make him jealous!" She couldn't, although she went from flirtations to very serious love affairs. Jealousy happened to be left out of his very fine nature. But before he met his death in the war he had fallen in love with an entirely different type of girl and, had he lived, his wife would have reaped the rewards of her attempt to make him jealous. But in a very different fashion than she had expected.

Jealousy is a sterile and bitter fruit.

Faith Baldwin

You are in a BEAUTY CONTEST every day of your life!

Buy a dozen cakes of Camay—the world's finest soap. Use it—to the exclusion of all other soaps, on your face, your hands, your body. Long before the dozen is gone, you'll see a new texture to your skin, an unsuspected *natural* loveliness!



The girl above, like every other woman in the world, is in the Great Beauty Contest of Life! Everywhere—eyes looking at her, judging her! How wonderful to have a clean, natural loveliness that draws a sincere tribute from everyone.



Natural loveliness begins with immaculate cleanliness. But be sure you use only the most delicate, the safest, of beauty soaps on your precious skin!



Delicate Camay, the Soap of Beautiful Women. Resolve to begin its use today and open up a new era of beauty for yourself and your precious skin!

A light lather of Camay on the cheek—a brief minute with a soft cloth and warm water—and a quick rinsing with cold water! ☆Your cheek glows because it is clean. It is soft and feathery to the touch because Camay, the Soap of Beautiful Women, is so soft, so *douce*. ☆Your skin is freed from the invisible dirt that clogs pores and ruins beauty. ☆Cherish your skin. Guard it only with Camay! . . . the one soap praised by 73 leading skin doctors. ☆You *are* in a Beauty Contest, every day of your life. Get all the help that Camay can give you. Don't trust your skin to a lesser soap.

CAMAY

THE SOAP OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

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If I Live to Be a Million, I'll Never Forget!

institution, and brought into a world of seeing people the blessed gifts to the blind. But I was not accepting them as gifts. They were the thrilling means whereby I eternally and un-faillingly sought praise.

And so it was after my graduation that I was put on the train in Boston en route to my very first vacation. Two whole months at one of those chummy beaches that dovetail themselves in the Connecticut shore front. Two whole months with a cousin, who could boast of a maid and a chauffeur. As the train sped on I day dreamed, dreams full of hopes and expectations, dreams of romance that were not confined to the end of my fingertips, fettered to the pages of books.

I was twenty-one, and even though my eyes were forever darkened to the beauties of romance, my heart and soul were

alive. In the pages of *Jane Eyre* I had thrust her completely out of the story, and placed the heart and soul of me in her place. And when my lover went blind in that story, I was the *Jane Eyre* who loved and understood.

And in the pages of *Braille* I had read much of romance in the summer sea waves, and so I dreamed; not of a sun-tanned, dark-eyed hero, of which I knew nothing, but of a hero whose voice would caress, whose touch would be friendly, and whose shoulders would be broad, masterful—and all mine.

THERE was magic at the seashore, a strange mingling of smells; odd sounds, the strangeness of salt tang and unfamiliar sea sounds.

"It's all so different, Prissy," I said excitedly. "Before the end of the day, though, I'll be accustomed to the feel of the sands beneath my feet."

"Esther, you're a marvel. Forgive me, dear, if I appear personal, but you know that no one would ever suspect that you are blind? Your eyes just look thoughtful and sort of mysterious, but they don't look blind."

A sudden thought flew into my head and lodged there. I grasped Prissy's hand. "Do you mean that? Do you really mean that I don't look blind?"

"You don't," she answered. "Your eyes are deep, mysterious and beautiful."

The little thought spread out its tentacles of desire, and clung fast to my stubborn will power. I almost gasped at the audacity of my plan, but I was too deep within its throes to evade it.

"Prissy, does anyone here know that I am blind?"

"Nobody but the maid. Why?"

"I'm going to swear her to secrecy, and don't tell another soul. For once in my life I'm going to be like other people."



"Esther!" he cried, "are you ill?"

"But I should think you'd get a bigger kick out of folks' knowing what a marvel you are."

"That's the point. At the end of my visit you may tell them."

"Oh, I see. The grand climax. All right, Esther, I'll keep mum. And may this visit be one you'll never, never forget."

And if I live to be a million, I never will forget.

It was a beautiful beach without a stick or a stone to mar its reputation, but to me it was an endless tract of unfamiliar crunchiness, with nothing to guide my prospecting footsteps, and so in all due respect to my new role, I cataloged the outlay of the house and furniture in my mind, and permitted the beach to sand its way to Eternity, for all of me. Then I met Prissy's friends.

It was great, being treated like other people; no one to grasp my arm the moment I looked as though I were going to move; no one to say, "Isn't this beautiful, Miss Palmer?" and then with a sudden intake of penitent breath, "Oh, forgive me, I forgot."

I even looked at snapshots that first night, placed just so in my hand by the ever watchful Prissy. I laughed at them with the others and made pertinent remarks. Everything was going great until the third night.

It didn't seem with Prissy by my side that a single thing could go wrong, but we had never contemplated that carload of friends that poured in upon Prissy on that third night. Even if we had, I don't believe Prissy would have singled out Arlo Fletcher as the figure who would bring disaster to me.

In the world of darkness, character and personality literally hang to the intonation of a voice, and the ear is keenly selective. And so, when I was bowing in happy acknowledgment in the meeting of Prissy's friends, I

Dark Happiness

suddenly heard the voice of my dreams, masterful, deep, with its throb of sincerity.

Intuitively I felt that a handclasp would go with that voice, and luckily I raised my own, or was it unluckily? Would it not have been better for him to know the truth? But his clasp, warm, friendly and sincere, sealed further my desire to be to him like other people.

AFTER the general hubbub of arrival excitement, he sought me out, as somehow I knew that he would. It didn't seem that my heart and soul could cry out so earnestly and not get its response. I felt someone by my side, and turned my head, attentive to voice direction.

"I have never met a friend of Prissy, who was not charming," the voice was saying, the voice of Arlo Fletcher, "but she has outdone herself in presenting you."

Right that moment the still, small voice of warning floundered and drowned in the roar of will. My dream hero was by my side, real and vivid, in a living never-to-be-forgotten moment, and so I smiled at him as I had smiled countless of times to my hero of silent dreams.

"You are ravishing. It's your eyes, you know. Others have told you, surely."

"What do you see in them?" I challenged.

"That is why they are so beautiful. I don't know what I see in them. A depth of hidden something. I don't know what. Surely not mystery in a young life like yours."

"Not a whiff of a mystery," I answered, plunging deeper into a deception that I never dreamed could hold so many heartaches.

Just then someone suggested dancing. It was in the days when home-made radio sets were highly respected, blatant and tin-panny though they were. The Missouri Waltz poured obligingly in, and I was in Arlo's arms. I don't know why I closed my eyes, unless I felt that I might be drifting in dreamland. "Don't do that, please," and he kissed them lightly. "Perhaps your eyes will give up their secret to the moonlight."

And then the dance was over. It was the end of that programme, and turn and twirl the dials as they may, the whole radio world was obsessed with a political speech that found no place in romances by the sea.

Tinkling glasses of lemonade, dainty tid-bit sandwiches, the June tang of the sea, and Arlo by my side. Folks sometimes say, "as pretty as a picture," but I wonder if the seeing eye really ever gets to the depth of the soul of the artist's masterpiece, as the blind do in the picture of the heart.

My hand was snuggling in the warmth of his handclasp as we sat there, music drifting from gay voices to the plaintive chords of a ukelele, heaven not at all out of reach.

And when Arlo said goodnight, it seemed as though he were stepping back into the pages of romance from whence he had come, and that night I winged an earnest prayer heavenward, "Oh, God, don't close the pages of my book. Please."

I wonder if I went to sleep, or did my wonderful evening merge into a dream and continue the night through. The first real thing was the smell of coffee in the morning, and the sound of breakfast doings. It was then that Prissy came into my room.

"I didn't say good night to you, dear, as I didn't want to break in upon your one wonderful evening."

"Just one wonderful evening, Prissy? Oh no, for he said he would come again many, many times."

"That is why you must tell him the truth, dear. Arlo Fletcher is no light lover. Neither of you deserves a broken heart. Last night I played up to your whims, but, Esther, it cannot go on. We didn't figure on Arlo, you know."

I SLIPPED on my new silk kimono and sank into a chair close by. Even the purling waves seemed to end in a splash of despair, and the tang of the sea was obnoxious. Heaven was again out of reach, blue and cloudless to the seeing eye, perhaps, but mingling with the murkiness of blindness to me.

"I can't tell him, Prissy. I can't. You don't know what it is to read and wonder. You don't know what it is to long to be like other people, to be loved for self alone without the eternal tinge of pity. The loss of one faculty gives strength to another, Prissy, and dreaming is the strongest of them all."

"Tonight, then, you may have your way. Just tonight, but after that—"

I promised, and I surely meant to keep that promise, but that night by the light of the moon, that Arlo said was silver, he told me of his love for me.

"Some day I am going to ask you to marry me, but it wouldn't be fair only the second time I have met you, would it? But I'm warning you. I'm going to make love to you, and some day I'm going to know of that hidden something that lies in the depth of your eyes."

Skilfully my fingers sought his face, and I cupped my hand over his lips with an attempt of coyness. My eyes, I thought, would some day give up their mystery, have to give up their mystery, but not tonight. Oh, God, please, not tonight.

When in despair do not most of us shift and shuffle situations to meet our big desires? And thus did I try to fit into a certainty, conditions that could only have survived in a dream. I faced Prissy with the conditions.

"You are not answering, Prissy. You don't think I am right, then, that I should have a fling of happiness in my misfortune? You could have me tell him the truth, and throw away the happiest hours of my life, and submit to his pity. You, who know nothing of this, you, who are accepted by the world as your real, true self, a self that is not submerged in darkness, can ask me to do this. No, Prissy, I won't. This is my summer, and in the end, if Arlo really loves me, and I am the marvel that folks think I am, the question of whether I see life through his eyes or my own, should be of small consequence."

"You're right, dear," answered Prissy, "but Arlo should be permitted to be the judge now, before your fling of happiness becomes a deception."

I met Arlo that night with Prissy's words on my conscience, and as I sat by his side on the sands that were still warm from the heat of the day, I made up my mind to tell him. Arlo might step back into his pages of romance, and the book might be closed forever, but that one chapter in my life would be emblazoned in my heart and memory until Eternity.

"Arlo," I whispered.

"Yes, honey girl." His arm stole about me in a masterful embrace, and I felt his lips upon my own. Happiness was still mine for the holding.

"I'm—I'm so happy," I said instead. And the purling waves danced into gladness once more.

AND so I went on deceiving Arlo, making up on the one hand one of Nature's shortcomings, and on the other hand playing tricks with human hearts.

Two splendid weeks passed, during which I lived a love story that the deftest author could not pen. But a book does not go on forever; neither does it have such a cruel ending.

And what an ending!

It happened one night at the height of our happiest moment. Prissy had gone to the hospital to see a new baby with a promise to get back before Arlo should come. Even though Prissy didn't approve of my mad fling,

I Loved the Thrill of Their Amazement

she could not find it in her heart to leave me stranded.

I opened the crystal of my watch. By touching the hands gently with my fingertips I could tell the time. Notwithstanding the fact that this in itself is no feat

for Arlo to come and Prissy was not yet here.

Although I could move all about Prissy's house and not touch a thing, before Arlo and guests I clung to the haven of a chair. If Arlo suggested a stroll on the beach,



"Beautiful!" I whispered. And then I waited. . . .

among the blind, I always made it my business to open the crystal before sighted people to get the thrill of their sure enough amazement. But this time there was no thrill in the knowledge that I could so deftly tell time. There was a feeling of uneasiness, for it was almost time

it was very simple to strike an attitude of coyness and slip my hand into his arm and say, "Let's."

But soon he would be here, and I was alone! I could see him asking for a match or a glass of water or any one of a dozen things, where Prissy would save the situation.

Dark Happiness

And I could feel the mechanical knowledge of each and every room slip from me as I would feel his gaze upon me. I could see myself floundering helplessly.

Slowly I walked to the radio and turned it on, thankful for anything it had to offer to dispel that mood of uneasiness. I never liked jazz, but this time it was a welcome antidote for dread, and besides, that chair was within easy access of two rooms. I even found myself tapping my feet in time to the music in this comforting knowledge, when I heard Arlo's step on the verandah.

"Come in and listen to the music," I invited. This would have amply filled in Prissy's delay, if fate had not willed the playing of the Missouri Waltz. It didn't seem possible that a tender memory could be changed in a twinkling to a bitter one, but the hand of fate is tricky.

I WAS in his arms once more, dancing to the tune that had welded our hearts, hearts that were now tripping as one.

"That tune was made for us, honey girl, just for you and for me." Never could the peak of happiness be higher. Around and around and around the room we turned in the dreamy rhythm of the love waltz. The last note had died away, and Arlo was holding me in his arms in the lingering memory of it. Suddenly, and without the least warning he left me standing somewhere in Prissy's big living-room.

"Nothing must mar the effect of that waltz, dear." And the radio stopped. Bewildered and panic stricken, my trained ear did not pick up the click of the switch for direction.

But Arlo was unmindful of my terror. "Honey," he was saying, "sit in that chair by the bridge lamp. I have something to show you before Prissy comes. It's in my coat on the verandah. Wait and I'll get it."

The chair by the bridge lamp! It could have been in the midst of the Sahara Desert that moment. I hadn't the remotest idea where I was. And as three doors entered the verandah that ran along two sides of the house, that was no help, and he would be back in the fraction of a minute. Frantically my hands clutched the empty air in a vain effort to touch something familiar. Nothing responded to my touch.

Wavering, I stood there, his step once more in the room. I heard the faint rustle of paper, and took a desperate chance on that for direction. One step forward. Another. And then crash! And I was in a heap. Then I knew that I had smashed everything on Prissy's end table.

Immediately Arlo was by my side, lifting me out of the ruins. "Honey!" he said. "You are ill."

And I felt myself being placed in the very chair that but a moment before had been in space.

Ill! Hysterically ill! I was sitting on the brink of the end of all dreams, and I knew it. Oh, if Prissy would only come and stand by me in my confession. And Arlo's lips against my own abstracted the fashioning of that confession.

I heard a sound like the removing of a box cover. "Honey girl, how do you like this? I bought it for you today," and I knew that he was holding something up for my inspection, but I hadn't the faintest idea where to look.

"Beautiful," I whispered, and then I waited for a crash far worse than tipping over a dozen end tables, the crash of truth. Silence—deep, sickening silence. The sound of a cover being replaced.

"Esther, you're not ill. You're—you're blind."

"Yes," I answered simply.

The ticking of the clock was like a boom in the dead silence. For an eternal minute Arlo did not speak, and then, "Once I said I loved you because you were true

blue, and I longed for the mystery hidden in your eyes. Longed for it." His laugh was short and mirthless. I heard him stride from the room and pace the verandah. The endless pacing in the agony of suspense was driving me mad. Suddenly he stopped. The door of the verandah closed behind him. "Esther," he said, "I'm going now, away and alone to think." And he was gone.

It was there that Prissy found me an hour later, and it was there that I sobbed out my wretchedness in her arms. She didn't say, "I told you so." No, not Prissy.

"Perhaps some day, dear," was what she actually said, "he will know of that mystery that lies deep in your eyes; that longing to be just you. Perhaps time will soften the hurt that he thinks now is deception."

And that night in my prayers I begged God to make him understand, to think mercifully of me, and then I softly and reverently closed the book of our romance, into which the word "*finis*" did not appear.

"Arlo, oh Arlo, I only wanted to be happy."

INTO two years of work among the blind, I carried my memories, memories that were bought at such a cost. Often in the winter evenings when toasting my feet by our fireplace, I longed for Arlo, wondering what dream fancies he would see in the flickering flames.

And then I got Prissy's letter. "I am sure, dear, that Arlo at last must understand. He couldn't seem to reconcile himself to the fact that you had not meant to deceive, and so in order to make himself forget that love for you he could not kill, he plunged into his work with an intensity that was uncanny, and you probably realize what close work designing must be. He has put up a valiant fight to save his eyesight, but is now doomed to darkened rooms, and little or no hope of recovery. I wonder if you could talk to him, if it would help any. Forgive me, dear, but I think you owe it to him."

Mother left me after reading this letter to me. She knew me as no other human being in this world did. She knew the intensity of justice in me, even though for a time I lost its grasp in a fling of selfishness.

I reached for the phone and put in a long distance call, and my penitent voice sobbed over miles of wire into the darkened room from whence came Arlo's dear, familiar voice. But he was bitter, bitter with a despair that only served to strengthen the wrong I had done.

"Arlo, it is all my fault. Can't you forgive me? Can't you let me come to you and help you? I'd give my life to make reparation for the wrong I have done, although, before God, Arlo, I didn't mean to trick you."

"Do you think you could do anything to make amends for these last two years of hell I have been through? Call it what you may, Esther, but in your clever artfulness, I was deceived, and I don't believe in a hereafter for dead faith."

"Then you won't let me help you?"

"No. And please don't call me again. That is far from helping."

"Very well, Arlo. Goodbye, dear."

"Goodbye—Esther."

And he was gone, but that little hesitancy after he had said goodbye gave birth to a feeble hope that he still cared. And the little hope grew and grew.

I phoned again. This time to my guide. "I am going to Hartford early in the morning. Get train particulars, please, and be here early."

I added this night to another succession of wakeful nights, clinging to a last straw of hope in my newest endeavor.

On the train en route to Hartford I schooled Miss Winters in the rôle she must assume. "And in no way must he know that I am with you unless I give a signal. The signal will be a drop of (*Continued on page 127*)

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(Continued from page 18)

my handkerchief."

His mother admitted us. "We are from the state board for the blind." But we didn't say what state board.

I felt that I would have known anywhere that this was his mother. Her voice had in it the tender sincerity of Arlo's.

"Dear," she said, "someone to see you from the state board." A door closed behind her and she was gone, and I was actually in Arlo's presence.

Miss Winters spoke. "I am so sorry, Mr. Fletcher. So sorry."

Sympathy is the last thing in the world that teachers of the blind give. We instill, rather, the will to fight for self-reliance. But Miss Winters was following my strict orders.

"Pity," he scorned, as well I knew that he would. "Have I got to go on the rest of my days having folks sorry for me, pitying me?"

"I'm sorry if I have offended, Mr. Fletcher. I'll never make that mistake again, I assure you."

"You don't have to say it. No one has to say it. The very atmosphere drips with pity the moment a person steps into this room."

"Well, it would be a queer world if we were not sorry for people who are afflicted, wouldn't it?"

Arlo didn't answer. I could have wagered that his mind was with mine that very minute at Prissy's cottage in a never-to-be-forgotten moment.

And then Miss Winters in a business way outlined the work for the blind, urging Braille to fill in the long hours. "Let's begin now," and I knew that the Braille alphabet was spread over his knee, and that she was guiding Arlo's right index finger over the raised dots. "One raised dot, a; two dots horizontal, b; two dots vertical, c", and so on to j. I could hear his fingers laboring over the dots, little indeterminate masses to the beginner.

He groaned. "Never could I learn that. They all feel alike to me."

"Suppose we rest a minute. Unaccustomed fingertips numb quickly." And, indeed, that is true.

MISS WINTERS went on with the scheme that was working like magic, so far. If it failed I was in line for an apology to the Connecticut State Board. If successful—

"I think," continued Miss Winters, "if you and I could exchange seats, it would be easier. I work to much better advantage at the right of a pupil."

I could hear the scraping of chairs, waiting any moment for an explosion. It came. "I beg your pardon. I don't mean to be rude, but that is one thing folks must know now. Every time I attempt to move, I don't want to be grabbed by the elbow. I'm not learning to walk, and I know every inch of this room. I don't want to be steered around by anyone."

"I'm sorry," said Miss Winters, and genuine penitence could not have been more realistic. "But don't apologize. I admire your spirit, and understand it. If medical assistance fails, and you know that you have got to go through life in blindness, you would like to feel that you could be treated as man to man without that everlasting knowledge of your affliction. You hate pity so much that you would give every waking moment to be self-reliant and natural, so natural that your affliction would be secondary. It is a worthy ambition, and I commend you for it. Now, shall we go on with the alphabet?"

"Not today, please. Another day. You don't know it, but you have given me something to think of more vital than a humpy alphabet."

Miss Winters hesitated. We were being dismissed. Quickly I dropped my handkerchief.

"Just once," pleaded Miss Winters, "and then I will go."

The next minute I was in the chair beside Arlo. Resignedly he placed his hand on the sheet. With my own hand I guided his unaccustomed finger across the page of alphabet. At the "d" he stopped.

"It's no use. I can't go on. You didn't know when you were commending me for my spirit that I once refused to recognize that same spirit in the dearest friend I ever had. Neither do you know that I am where I am today because of my selfishness. And she could forgive and forget. She told me so only last night, and I turned her away. Oh, God, if only I could get back my sight again. I'd spend the rest of my life giving her the kind of happiness I understand now. I don't know why I am telling you this, but you seem to understand so much."

THE sound of footsteps crossed the room. A door closed gently. Arlo gave a little harsh laugh of bitterness.

"You're gone. No, you don't understand. Nobody understands but Esther."

"Yes, Arlo, I do understand." "Esther!"

What a volume of eloquence in two words. Groping hands in the darkness touched and clasped. An arm stole about me. A deep reverent silence too sacred for words.

Arlo at last spoke. "Esther, I need you, oh, how I need you, but I don't think I have the right."

"You have but to ask, Arlo. Come with me into my world of darkness, dear, and I will show you where happiness is."

And once more our book of romance was opened, and a new chapter begun, entitled Dark Happiness. Storms could rage, and winds could blow, but not a cloud appeared in the vault of our golden heaven.

The End

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Despite the Past

(Continued from page 101)



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him. He was the most fascinating man I had ever seen. There was something magnetic about him, something which drew me toward him mentally and physically! No other man than I had ever known appealed to me as this stranger did.

Every available minute of the remaining ten or twelve days of my vacation at the resort was spent in his company. We danced, dined together three times a day, took long walks along the boardwalk, attended shows, swam, or just sat around the lobby talking.

My love for him grew by leaps and bounds until I simply idolized him beyond words. A day or two before I was to go back home he professed his love and asked me to marry him. I did not hesitate to proclaim my love for him and announce that I'd be happy to marry him. But I foresaw obstacles to the marriage. I knew that both papa and mama would never consent to my marrying a man whom I had known for such a short time. He would have to prove himself to them. He was sure he could do that. He would go back to Philadelphia with me, tell them who he was and what he had been and ask for their consent to our marriage.

HE swept the family off their feet, as he had swept me off mine, with his magnetic personality. My sisters thought him too wonderful for words. My brothers declared that he was "a regular fellow."

I think the one thing about Jack that made such a deep impression on my parents was the fact that he belonged to our church and was of Irish extraction. Mama was very partial to Irishmen.

I was, of course, very happy to see the family take such a fancy to him. All my friends admired him, too. Everybody, without one exception, thought he was a perfectly lovely fellow. And then, all of a sudden, the clouds began to gather. The first intimation that all was not well came the night I went to the Pennsylvania Broad Street Station to see him off to Chicago on "a business trip."

As we were going in one door my old chum Lillian Delaney with whom I had worked on the jewelry counter at Slaters, came out the other. She hadn't met Jack. I wanted her to meet him. I called to her. She turned and came back smiling.

"Anna," she kissed me, "I heard the other day that you were going to be married and I'm—"

"Yes," I interrupted, "and here's the unfortunate man."

"Oh," she gasped as a startled look crept into her eyes.

Jack flushed crimson as he acknowledged the introduction. I sensed something wrong immediately. Lillian appeared to be terribly agitated while Jack was ill at ease and anxious to get away.

"Oh, excuse me, Mr. Caruthers," Lillian added, "I thought I knew you." "I've frequently made the same mistake," Jack smiled.

Their remarks did not remove the suspicion that something was wrong. They seemed to be hiding something. There was utterly no doubt in my mind that they had met before.

Could he be playing a game with me? No, I mused, he loves me. His actions, his every word revealed his love. I had no doubt about that. But something was wrong and I was determined to find out what it was. I wouldn't rest until I did.

The morning after his departure for Chicago Lillian called me at the house. She wanted to see me at lunch that day. She had "something very important" to tell me. We met downtown.

"Anna," she began, "I want to tell you something that's been on my mind since last night."

"What is it, Lillian?" I asked. "It's about Mr. Caruthers," she said. "You know him?" I smiled. "You've met him before?"

"Well, I don't know, Anna," she went on. "I'm not sure about it. I've tried to make myself believe that I haven't but I can't do it. It's terrible if it's true," she shook her head, "and I hope you won't be mad at me for telling you."

I assured her that I wouldn't be. "It's about the robbery at our store last January," she resumed, "when we were held up for all our stock amounting to over five hundred thousand dollars. You remember?"

"Very well," I replied, "but what's all that got to do with Mr. Caruthers, Lillian?"

"He—he was the burglar who held us up."

"My God, Lillian!" I cried. "What are you saying?"

"I hope I'm wrong, Anna."

"Of course you're wrong," I snapped. "Jack is a mining engineer and a graduate of Harvard and he comes from a lovely, well-to-do family in Boston. What ever made you think that he was a criminal?"

"The gray hair around his temples and his voice," she replied.

"Good heavens," I said, "there are hundreds of men who have gray hair around their temples. Did you see the burglar's face?"

"No," she answered, "he had on a black mask. I only saw the side of his head."

I WAS relieved.

"Did you ever see his left wrist, Anna?" she continued. "Do you know whether or not he has a deep, red scar on his left wrist?"

"No," I replied. "Why do you ask?"

"Well," she went on, "before he tied my hands behind me and led me to the vault with the rest of the employees I saw the deep, red scar on his left wrist when he reached in one of the show cases for a tray of diamond rings."

"I don't think he has any scars on his left wrist," I said, "but I will find out if he has when he comes back to the city. I—"

"Oh, I must be wrong about it, Anna," she cried. "I hope so! It would be so terrible."

I was in a daze when I left Lillian Delaney and went back to the store. I tried with all my strength to fight off the suspicion that he was what she thought he was. It was unbelievable!

Then I recalled the expression that crept into his eyes occasionally. And that strangeness we had noted at first meeting him.

"When he returns to the city," I thought, "I shall find out. If he has a

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